



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Hazardous Materials Storage Concerns on the Farm

Hazardous material storage, particularly of pesticides, is of critical importance in both everyday and disaster situations. Not only can improperly stored pesticides and other hazardous materials pose significant hazards to humans, but they also can do great harm to the environment, including contamination of surface water and groundwater.

Accordingly, take appropriate measures to minimize quantities stored and potential exposure to floods and other disaster and emergency events. If a pesticides or other hazardous materials accident occurs, be sure to follow safe, legal methods for emergency response, containment, and cleanup.

Prevention

- *Choose a safe location.* If at all possible, locate all hazardous materials in an area that is out of harm's way.
- *Develop a safe pesticide storage area.* Features may include a mixing and loading pad, a drainage system to collect contaminated runoff, a worker safety area, and a separate area for your personal protective clothing and equipment.
- *Keep pesticide storage to a minimum.* The fewer pesticides on site, the less you have to worry about. Consider the following:
 - Contract to have pesticides applied. This eliminates storage and most liability concerns.
 - Clean out existing inventories. If a pesticide is still registered for use, give it to a producer who can legally use it. If it is no longer registered, dispose of it properly.
 - Purchase only enough pesticide for a single season.
 - Take extra care with water-permeable containers. Dry formulations packed in paper bags, cardboard boxes or similar containers should be stored on metal shelves. Do not store liquid pesticides on shelves above dry formulations.
- If flooding, a tornado, or another disaster is imminent, move all hazardous materials to a higher storage location.
- Develop an emergency response plan in case of a leak, spill, or fire.

If a Hazardous Materials Accident Occurs

- If you suspect a hazardous material accident has occurred, use great caution in investigating the immediate area. Wear appropriate protective clothing, particularly safety boots, to avoid exposure. Depending on the scope and nature of the accident, you should notify your Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC).
- Take appropriate steps to prevent further release of the materials. Put smaller containers that are leaking into larger containers and contain the spill material to the fullest extent possible by constructing a dam to prevent the chemical from spreading.
- If livestock are downwind, downhill, or downstream of the incident, move them as far as possible from the area.
- Do not enter the area or attempt to reach animals if you must pass the area of incident.
- Refer to the Radiological Accidents section for information on protecting food and water sources.

After a Hazardous Materials Accident

- Monitor animals for signs of illness that may be associated with the accident.
- Contact local authorities for information on the cleanup of land and animals.

Adapted from resource material developed by the University of Wisconsin Extension Service entitled "The Disaster Handbook for Extension Agents"